



County of Lethbridge Policy Handbook

EFFECTIVE: March 3, 2005

SECTION: 100 NO. 142

APPROVED BY: County Council

SUBJECT: Workplace Violence

REVISED DATE:

PURPOSE:

The County of Lethbridge is committed to providing a working environment free of violence, to comply with the Occupational Health & Safety Code of Alberta, and any other relevant legislation.

POLICY:

The County of Lethbridge recognizes the potential for workplace violence and other aggressive behavior directed at our employees, volunteers, and council/board members. The County of Lethbridge will not tolerate behavior from anyone that intimidates, threatens, harasses, abuses, injures or otherwise victimizes our employees and will take whatever steps are appropriate to protect our employees from the potential risks associated with workplace violence. We are committed to providing our staff with an appropriate level of protection from the risks associated with workplace violence.

DEFINITION:

Violence is defined as the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that includes abusive statements, threats (direct and indirect), intimidation, coercion, harassment, insults, or anything that causes or is likely to cause physical injury. It can include unwelcome and inappropriate verbal or physical conduct, which offends or humiliates a person, and can interfere with that person's ability to do their job.

"Appropriate Management Level" for the purpose of this policy means a worker's immediate supervisor, or, where the supervisor is involved in the alleged incident, then the supervisor's supervisor shall be the appropriate manager.

PROCEDURE:

All staff at the County of Lethbridge share responsibility for striving to ensure violence-free work environment. No employee can be penalized, reprimanded or in any way criticized when acting in good faith while following the procedures set forth for addressing situations involving workplace violence.



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Management Responsibilities

1. Supervisors, Directors, and the County Manager will inform employees if they are working in an area where there is potential for violence and identify any risks that are specific to that area.
2. Supervisors, Directors, and the County Manager will ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to minimize the risk to our employees from violence and that employees are trained in recognizing and responding to situations involving workplace violence.
3. Supervisors, Directors, and the County Manager will make certain that every reported incident of workplace violence is investigated and that regular risk assessments are conducted to identify potential areas of improvement.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees of the County of Lethbridge are required to be familiar with and follow the procedures that are in place to protect them from workplace violence.

Employees will attend workplace violence prevention training, when required.

1. Employees are required to immediately report all incidents of workplace violence to their supervisor or other person in authority (e.g. Supervisor, Director, County Manager). A copy of the incident report will be submitted to the County Manager.
2. Employees are also responsible for participating in work site risk assessments and implementing controls and procedures to mitigate the associated risk.

Within the above framework, employees of the County of Lethbridge are trained to:

1. Recognize Violence

Employees strive to recognize violence through awareness of early warning signs, such as:

- Threatening behavior
- Inappropriate statements (verbal and written)
- Veiled threats (verbal and written)



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- Radical changes in behavior
 - An escalation in complaints about the service, the job or a particular employee
 - Argumentative behavior / dialogue on the phone
 - Signs of distraction or increased inability to cope with work

2. Report Workplace Violence

An employee or an individual who believes they are subject to violence has a responsibility to inform the offender that such behavior is unwelcome. This can include abusive statements and indirect threats as these can escalate to aggressive behavior.

All incidents are to be documented (quoting the words spoken), detailing the response taken and the outcome. This documentation is forwarded to the supervisor or other person in authority, who will forward the documentation to the appropriate management level for follow-up.

3. Know Safeguard Procedures

Employees can minimize situations from escalating and ensure safety of person and property in the case of an escalating incident through awareness and adherence to a safeguard plan. This plan may encompass:

- Remaining calm and politely explaining that the County of Lethbridge does not tolerate these behaviors or statements, if situations warrant. If this is successful in changing the perpetrator's behavior, the conversation can continue.
- Terminating conversations (either on the phone or in person), and leaving the immediate situation, where warranted.
- Notifying persons who can assist you.
- Activating emergency alarms where applicable.
- Calling for Emergency assistance (Dial 911 or using other means of communication such as the two-way radio to have the call made).



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- Following contact and check-in procedures, when working alone or in the field.

In all cases, incidents of workplace violence are to be reported through the procedure above, and will be investigated by the appropriate management level for follow-up. Nothing in the above noted procedure precludes an individual from submitting a complaint directly to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission or the police.